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ABSTRACT

Little empirical research has documented the impressionistic reports that mature-age students bring a unique and highly desirable set of personal qualities to the teaching profession. To help fill the gap, this study gathered empirical data from both mature-age and college-age students (N=74) on the following: (1) personality characteristics; (2) dominant personality types of these two groups; (3) levels of self-realization and integration; (4) reasons for becoming teachers; and (5) personal and professional goals. All the participants took the 1986 revised form of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and completed a brief information form. The CPI measures 20 folk concepts or personality characteristics that are called into play in daily interactions. Data analysis showed similarities among the set of scales that measure more interactional, socially observable qualities, such as dominance, sociability, and social presence. The 12 scales on which the mature-age students scored significantly higher were those assessing the more internal values and control mechanisms. Both groups had similar proportions of personality types, but their self-realization scores were significantly different; the mature-age students showed higher levels. The fact that the mature-age students scored higher on 12 of the 20 concepts suggests questions relative to educational policy and practice. Four tables displaying the data are attached. (AMH)

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New Teachers With Life Experiences: How Different Are They?

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Recent reports on teacher recruitment in the U.S.A. indicate that the slow but steady rise in the number of traditional college-age freshmen who express a desire to teach has been augmented by a small but important group of mature-age students (Berger, 1988). The trend among older students to choose teaching is attributed to several factors which include: the opening of job opportunities and better teacher salaries; a desire to make a difference in the lives of young people; and flexibility of time. In addition, some states, notably New Jersey, are seeking to increase the pool of teacher candidates by actively recruiting liberal arts majors and professionals looking for a mid-career change.

Many of the mature-age students have a bachelors degree and extensive work experience. They are in the process of changing jobs and earning their teacher certification. Others in this group, who are turning to teaching, have had some positive experience with the educational system as volunteers, aides, or parents.

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Teacher educators often voice a preference for teaching mature-age students and state that these individuals have more to bring to the classroom than those who enter teaching immediately after graduation from college. "If you give them a reading assignment, they read. If you give them a writing assignment, they write" said one professor of education. "These people have a tremendous amount to give to the field," remarked another. "They have a bank of experience which can help in theory and practice. They take teaching as a commitment and profession" (Davidson, 1989, A3). Whatever the background of these mature-age students, teacher educators find that they constitute a distinct group of prospective teachers. Often, the characteristics that reportedly distinguish them from the traditional college-age students are personal qualities or attributes customarily associated with higher levels of maturity.

In telling their own stories, mature-age students describe themselves as having a well-developed sense of personal identity and the ability to deal with different personalities and situations. "I know who I am," said one mature-age student when asked to name her unique qualification for the teaching profession. Another young woman, who worked in international banking and then established her own wholesale flower business, responded by saying, "The variety of my experiences, especially in jobs, has made it possible for me to understand that certain elements are always present: politics, variety of

personalities, injustice, nit-picking, bureaucracy, etc. It is necessary not to be totally absorbed or oppressed by these factors. Rather, they must be predicted, managed, or circumvented" (Haipt, 1987-88, 19).

While it appears to be the accepted wisdom that mature-age students bring a unique and highly desirable set of personal qualities to the teaching profession, little empirical research has been done to document the impressionistic reports upon which this wisdom is based. The present study gathered empirical data to evaluate some rather widespread impressions about mature-age students. It sought to answer the following questions: 1) What are the personality characteristics of traditional college-age and mature-age students? 2) What are the dominant personality types of these two groups of students? 3) What are their levels of self-realization and integration? 4) What are their reasons for becoming teachers? 5) What are their personal and professional goals? In each case, the traditional college-age group was compared with the mature-age group to determine similarities and differences of statistical significance.

The study has implications for educational policy and practice insofar as teacher educators are responsive to the needs, abilities, and learning styles of their students. If age and experience contribute to a more advanced personal development of mature-age students over traditional college-age students entering the teaching profession, then teacher

education has to accommodate itself to the differences so that the gifts and talents of each group can be maximized.

Method

Subjects

Both the traditional college-age and the mature-age students who participated in the study were drawn from seven colleges in the Consortium of Colleges in Westchester County, New York. The colleges are located in the suburbs of New York City where most of the subjects also live. All of the 74 students (35 traditional college-age and 39 mature-age students) were females. The traditional college-age students were 21 or 22 years old. The mature-age students, on the other hand, ranged in age from 24 to 52 with an average age of 34 years and a median age of 33 years. None of the traditional college-age students in the study were married but 59% of the mature-age students were married. Another 20.5% of the mature-age subjects were single and the same percentage of this group (20.5%) were separated or divorced.

Six (15%) of the mature-age subjects had majored in English during their undergraduate years and four (10%) in communication arts. Altogether this group of 39 college graduates represented 24 different majors from a variety of disciplines. The traditional college-age students concentrated in fewer subject areas. They represented 11 majors: ten (29%) of the 35 were psychology majors; eight

(23%) were elementary education majors; and four (11%) were special education majors. Of the total number of participants, 39 (53%) were qualifying for elementary teacher certification; 15 (20%) for special education; 12 (16%) for secondary education; six (8%) for art education; and one each for music education and reading.

Occupations held by the mature-age students were many and varied. They represented twenty-four of the occupations listed in the "Occupational Outlook Handbook" published by the U.S. Dept. of Labor Statistics, 1988. The categories of work cited include managerial and management-related occupations, physical scientists, social scientists and urban planners, librarians and counselors, social and recreational workers, health technologists and technicians, visual artists, marketing and sales occupations, administrative support occupations and personal services workers. In terms of years and kinds of careers, the mature-age group had a very diverse background of work experiences.

Instrumentation

All of the participants took the 1986 revised form of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), which consists of 462 items, and a brief information form prepared especially for the study. The reliability and factor analysis of the CPI are discussed in detail by Harrison Gough (1987). The alpha coefficients for male and female

college students range from .52 to .81 on the inventory's 20 scales (p. 32). According to Lewis Aiken (1988), "The CPI has been more extensively standardized than any other criterion-keyed inventory and, with the exception of the MMPI, is the most thoroughly researched (p. 381)."

The CPI measures 20 folk concepts or personality characteristics which are called into play during our everyday interactions with others. The instrument also yields one of four personality types and indicates the degree of self-realization attained by the respondent.

The goals of the 20 folk concept scales are instrumental in nature. That is to say, they are intended to identify individuals in the way that other people normally classify them. For example, the scale for Responsibility aims to identify persons consensually described by others as responsible, honest, dependable, and conscientious (high-scorers), or as irresponsible, undependable, erratic, and slipshod (low-scorers). The same scale also predicts the behavior of the individuals in situations that call forth responsible conduct. In the words of Gough, the purpose of each scale of the CPI is "to assess the cluster or complex of qualities subsumed under the same name or concept by the folk" (1987 p. 3). Overall, the inventory indicates the degree to which a person possesses or lacks certain intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities considered important in daily life.

The questionnaire which accompanied the CPI was designed to obtain a better understanding of the subjects and their career aspirations. It provided demographic data and information about the subjects' reasons for deciding to become teachers as well as their career and life goals. Construction of these questions was based upon the educational literature which discusses who and why people go into teaching. Responses to the questionnaire provided a clearer profile of the two groups studied and a fuller context in which to interpret the results.

Procedure

The CPI inventory and information form along with a letter explaining the nature and purpose of the study were distributed at each of the seven colleges. Data were collected from the spring of 1988 to the spring of 1989. Some of the mature-age respondents were disqualified from the study because they were fulfilling their certification requirements as part of their first degree. Only those holding bachelors degrees who had returned to college for teacher certification were selected for the study. Furthermore, several of the respondents were disqualified because of invalid protocols. Scores on key scales suggested that the subjects were faking-good, faking-bad, or were nonresponsive.

The CPI protocols were handscored for measures of personality characteristics, personality type and degree of

self-realization. Scores were then entered into a data file for analysis using the SPSS/PC+ computer software program. Comparisons between the traditional college-age and mature-age students on the 20 folk concept scales were made using a t-test with a probability level of $P \leq .05$. Likewise, the t-test was used to examine the personality types and measures of self-realization for each of the two groups. Finally, chi-square tests were performed to determine whether or not the two groups differed from one another with respect to their reasons for deciding to teach and their specific life goals.

Findings

1. Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Qualities - Results from the analyses indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the college-age and mature-age groups on eight of the 20 folk concepts scales of the California Psychological Inventory. However, there were significant differences between the two groups on 12 of the folk concepts (See Table 1). Scores revealed differences in favor of the mature-age student at the .01 level of significance on 10 of these 12 scales: Capacity for Status, Responsibility, Self-control, Good Impression, Well-being, Tolerance, Achievement via Conformance, Achievement via Independence, Intellectual Efficiency and Psychological-mindedness. The Independence and Socialization scores showed differences at the .05 level. In each case where

there was a significant difference, the mature-age group received a higher mean score suggesting more positive adjustment and functioning than the college-age group. Table 2 presents the group means, standard deviations, and t-values obtained on each of the 20 CPI folk concept scales.

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Insert Tables 1 and 2 - about here

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The seven CPI scales on which the mean score of the mature-age group fell within the range of high scorers were: Capacity for Status, Independence, Good Impression, Tolerance, Achievement via Conformance, Achievement via Independence, and Psychological-mindedness.

2. Dominant Personality Types - Scoring results from the two structural scales of the CPI showed that the dominant personality types in both groups were interpersonally oriented and focused (Alpha types and Gamma types) rather than internally oriented and focused (Beta types and Delta types). In the college-age group (N=35), 37% were Alpha types and another 37% were Gamma types. In the mature-age group (N=39), 44% were Alpha types and 31% were Gamma types. Thus, close to three-quarters of the subjects in each group fell into these two personality classifications.

Insert Table 3 - about here

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3. Levels of Self-realization and Integration of Personality - The CPI scores also yielded a measure of self-realization which needs to be read in conjunction with the personality type. Gough identified seven levels of realization or integration of the personality. "Levels 1,2, and 3 represent poor, distinctly below average, and below average realization and integration of type potential respectively; level 4 indicates average integration and realization; and levels 5,6 and 7 represent above average, distinctly above average, and superior realization and integration of type potential, respectively" (McAllister, 1988, p. 4).

Application of the t-test to group means showed a significant difference in self-realization and integration at the .01 level (t=-4.21). Again, the differences favored the mature-age group where 64% of the students scored at above average levels of integration as compared with 31% percent of the traditional college-age students. Only 8% of the mature-age population scored below average in personality type realization while 43% of the college-age population scored below average on the same measure.

Insert Table 4 - about here

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4. Reasons for Becoming a Teacher - On the questionnaire or information form, participants were asked to rate 11 reasons of importance to them in their decision

to become a teacher. The choices given were: 1) very important, 2) somewhat important, and 3) not important. A chi-square analysis comparing the two groups indicated a highly significant difference, $X (2,74)=20.67$ on only one of the 11 items, namely, the desire for convenient hours with summers off. Ninety percent of the mature-age students regarded this factor as very important and somewhat important. No differences were found on the remaining 10 items which included: I feel that I can be an effective teacher; I like to interact with people on my job; improve students' attitudes; financial security; contribute to students' growth and development; share my knowledge with students; enjoyed school as a student; teaching provides an important, meaningful job; teaching is a respected profession; and job security and stable employment. Among these reasons for deciding to become a teacher, the one which elicited the highest number of "very important" responses from both groups was contribute to students' growth and development.

5. Personal and Professional Goals - On the measure in which subjects were asked to indicate the importance to them of 10 personal and professional goals, four categories to choose from were provided: 1) essential, 2) very important, 3) somewhat important, and 4) not important. The chi-square analysis revealed no significant differences between the two groups in any of these categories.

Further inspection revealed that more than one-third of the total number of respondents (i.e. between 26 and 49 subjects) rated four of the 10 items as essential. When these four items were ranked in order of importance, they were: contributing to the personal as well as intellectual development of my students (66%); raising a family (43%); being recognized as a person with high moral standards (42%); and working effectively as a team member (35%). More than one-half (N=42) of the total number of respondents rated becoming a supervisor or educational administrator as not important. The remaining five items were: taking an active role in professional organizations; getting married; participating in my church; becoming involved in my community; and assuming leadership among my colleagues.

Discussion

Results of this study indicate similarities and differences in intrapersonal and interpersonal qualities between a group of traditional college-age and a group of mature-age female students preparing for teacher certification. The similarities occur mainly among the set of scales which measure what Gough calls "the more interactional, socially observable qualities" (1987, p.5), such as Dominance, Sociability, and Social Presence. High scorers on these folk concept scales of the CPI are described as assertive, friendly, and self-assured. Average standard scores for the two groups on these scales were

above the mean of 50. The level of such qualities in the subjects studied represents a positive finding since teachers are constantly interacting with students, colleagues, administrators, staff and parents. These results auger well for the teaching profession because social skills marked by confidence, comfort and ease are important assets in a teacher's repertoire of behaviors.

The twelve scales of the CPI on which the mature-age students scored significantly higher than the traditional college-age students were those assessing the more "internal values and control mechanisms" (Gough, 1987, p. 5). These folk concepts included Responsibility, Self-control, and Tolerance. Persons scoring high on these scales are described as responsible, self-disciplined, and tolerant of different beliefs and values. One explanation for these differences is that life's choices and informal learning have provided the mature-age students with more opportunities to experiment with and to internalize those hidden virtues and values that are claimed, but not yet owned, by many traditional college-age students.

As a whole, the personality types derived from the CPI showed that the participants were more interpersonally than internally oriented and focused. According to Loring McAllister, "Alpha types are active individuals who are interpersonally oriented, productive, and task-focused. They tend to be ambitious, readily accept responsibility for leading or managing others, and generally adhere to external

norms and customs" (1988 p. 4). Similarly, "Gamma types are interpersonally focused, but make judgments and decisions on a highly individualistic basis. They are skeptical and tend to question rather than accept traditional norms and values, but nonetheless remain actively involved in commerce with others" (1988, p. 5). The Alpha and Gamma types provide an interesting mix of teachers, one accepting institutional norms and values, the other questioning them. Yet, each one is oriented towards others and interpersonally involved. In general, the kind of interactive work that teaching entails is compatible with the personality types of the majority of the subjects studied.

Although both groups had similar proportions of the four personality types produced by the inventory, their self-realization scores were significantly different. Again, the levels of realization were much higher for the mature-age students than for the college-age students. The data obtained from the study indicate that the mature-age students have achieved a higher measure of growth and development than the traditional college-age students. Thus, the results support the perceptions generally expressed by teacher educators and mature-age students.

In their article on "Teacher Education As Adult Development," Carol Witherell and Lois Erickson (1978) state that as persons grow developmentally they become better able to understand themselves and others. They also grow in their ability to interpret life's situations at higher

levels of conceptualization and to generate various alternatives. These capabilities, in turn, help to increase their range of behaviors and coping strategies.

The significantly higher mean scores of the mature-age group on 12 of the 20 intrapersonal and interpersonal concepts suggest a more positive functioning and adjustment of the mature-age group as teachers. From a cognitive developmental perspective, these students tend to be more advanced in their ability to make life-giving decisions, to handle complex problems and issues, and to relate effectively with others.

What then are some of the questions relative to educational policy and practice raised by this study? Do the similarities and differences observed warrant separate teacher education programs for each group? Do we need to design shorter programs with greater flexibility for the mature-age students? Are mature-age students our candidates of choice for alternative routes to teacher certification? In terms of program content and methods, should the mature-age group have greater autonomy in their learning situation than the traditional college-age students?

In the everyday world where students learn from one another as well as from the teacher, mature-age students can help to bring a greater sense of reality about the adult world to the college students' perspective. Acting as mentors, mature-age students can provide points of view on

relationships and work situations that broaden the more limited experiences of the traditional college-age students. Teacher educators can create opportunities for discussion and cooperative learning within the college classroom that facilitate sharing and exchanges which are mutually beneficial to both groups of students. The self-direction and motivation of the mature-age students can serve as models for the college-age students, demonstrating levels of self-realization and integration which the latter are still striving for. Mutuality and complementarity of the two groups are to be desired in the preparation of these future teachers as well as in the profession which awaits them.

It may be that mature-age students move more quickly through a teacher education program than their college-age counterparts, or that they need less field work because of extensive contacts with children outside of the classroom. High group scores on the CPI scales of Independence, Achievement via Independence, and Psychological-mindedness indicate, for example, that mature-age students are goal-oriented and confident, self-sufficient and able to work independently, and that they read people well. In order to accommodate an increasingly diverse population of students, teacher education programs have to be flexible in their requirements, and provide an advisement system that is sensitive to student needs and abilities. In making choices about teaching methods, educators not only have to know the personal qualities and unique learning styles of their

students, but they also have to consider the nature of the subject, their objectives, and the learning environment. All of these factors help in determining appropriate practice and a responsive approach to student learning.

The aim of the current study was to provide a research base for teacher educators to evaluate the perceived differences between traditional college-age and mature-age students. It sought to assist educators and employers of new teachers in understanding the personal qualities and attributes which the two groups of students bring to teaching. The results indicate that the entrance of mature-age students into the teaching profession is a positive trend and that their diverse work and life experience constitute a wealth of resources for teaching and learning. The study is limited in that it does not test another set of personal qualities, namely, energy, enthusiasm, and idealism which are often ascribed to traditional college-age students.

While the CPI provides an empirical basis for better educating persons at different stages of life, there is still the need to know students as individuals and to provide instruction that builds upon and promotes their growth and development. By recognizing and building upon the individual differences of their education students, teacher educators model their students' own highest-rated reason for choosing to become teachers.

Table 1

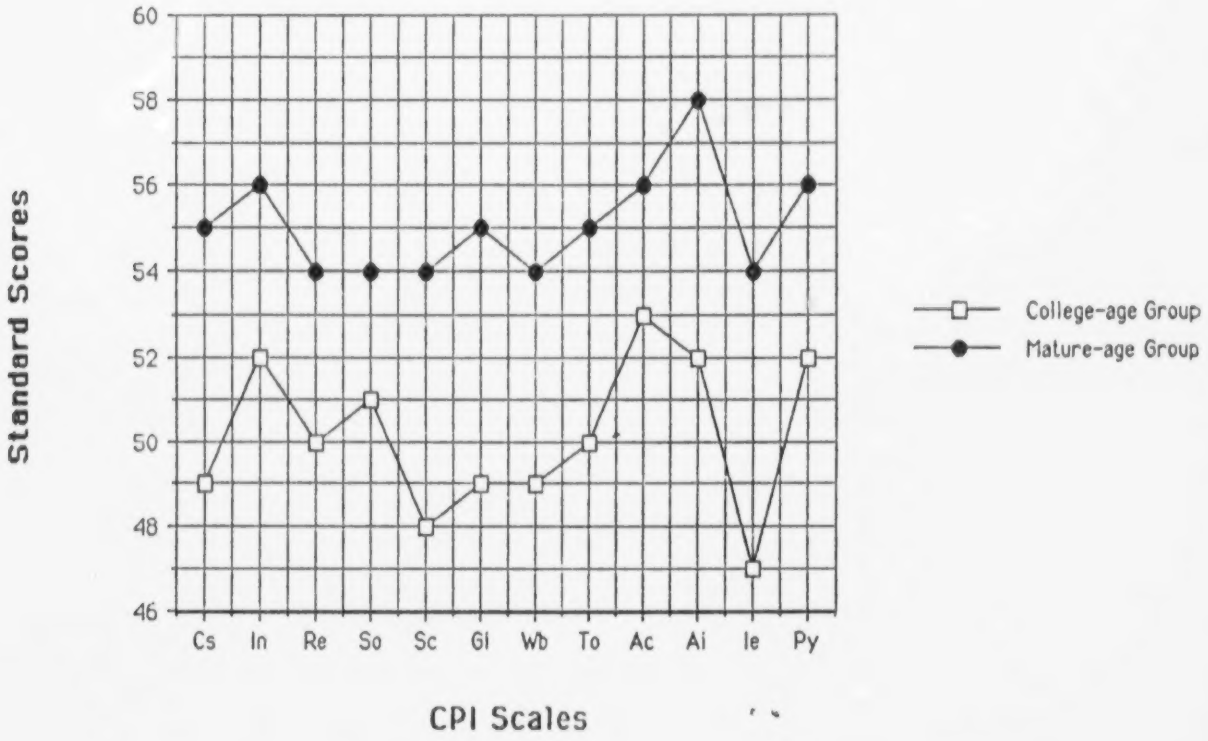
Group Means, Standard Deviations, and t-Values Obtained on the CPI Scales (Raw Scores)

CPI Scale	College-age N=35		Mature-age N=39		t-Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Domirance	22.6857	5.582	24.8974	5.866	-1.66
Capacity for Status	16.1429	3.566	18.7692	2.995	-3.41**
Sociability	23.1143	4.086	23.6154	4.108	- .53
Social Presence	26.4571	3.752	26.9487	4.931	- .49
Self-acceptance	19.4286	2.559	19.8462	3.031	- .64
Independence	16.6000	4.174	18.7949	3.458	-2.45*
Empathy	23.1429	3.703	23.6923	5.282	- .52
Responsibility	25.6000	3.440	27.8462	3.513	-2.78**
Socialization	31.6571	5.230	34.3077	4.293	-2.37*
Self-control	19.8857	5.318	24.0256	4.481	-3.60**
Good Impression	16.6286	4.796	20.5128	3.776	-3.84**
Communality	36.1714	1.200	36.1026	1.861	.19
Well-being	29.9429	3.548	32.7692	3.272	-3.55**
Tolerance	21.2571	3.567	24.4103	3.857	-3.65**
Achievement via Conformance	28.7429	3.576	31.3846	3.529	-3.19**
Achievement via Independence	23.2000	4.028	26.6923	4.066	-3.71**
Intellectual Efficiency	28.4000	4.888	32.2564	4.185	-3.63**
Psychological-mindedness	15.5143	2.874	17.9487	2.800	-3.68**
Flexibility	14.0571	2.733	14.0769	3.723	- .03
Femininity/Masculinity	20.3714	3.144	20.0769	2.650	.43

* $p = < .05$
** $p = < .01$

Table 2

A Comparison of Mean Standard CPI Scores Between College-age Group and Mature-age Group Entering Teaching



Cs = Capacity for Status
In = Independence
Re = Responsibility
So = Socialization
Sc = Self-control
Gi = Good Impression
Wb = Sense of Well-being
To = Tolerance
Ac = Achievement via Conformance
Ai = Achievement via Independence
Ie = Intellectual Efficiency
Py = Psychological-mindedness

Table 3

PERSONALITY TYPES

(The California Psychological Inventory scores yield four personality types.)

ALPHAS are enterprising, dependable, outgoing
BETAS are reserved, responsible, moderate
GAMMAS are adventurous, restless, pleasure-seeking
DELTAS are withdrawn, private, somewhat disaffected

Personality Types	College-age (N=35)	Mature-age (N=39)
ALPHAS	37 %	44 %
BETAS	12 %	20 %
GAMMAS	37 %	31 %
DELTAS	14 %	5 %

The dominant personality types in both groups were interpersonally oriented and focused (Alpha and Gamma types) rather than internally oriented and focused (Beta and Delta types).

Table 4

REALIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF PERSONALITY

(Harrison G. Gough identified 7 levels of realization and psychological integration of personality.)

Levels 1, 2, 3 - represent poor, distinctly below average, and below average realization and integration of type potential, respectively

Level 4 - indicates average integration and realization

Level 5, 6, 7 - represent above average, distinctly above average, and superior realization and integration of type potential

Self-realization	College-age (N=35)	Mature-age (N=39)
Above average (5,6,7)	31 %	64 %
Below average (1,2,3)	43 %	8 %

Results from the application of the t-test to group means showed a significant difference in self-realization and integration of personality between the traditional college-age and the mature-age students at the .01 level with differences favoring the mature-age group.